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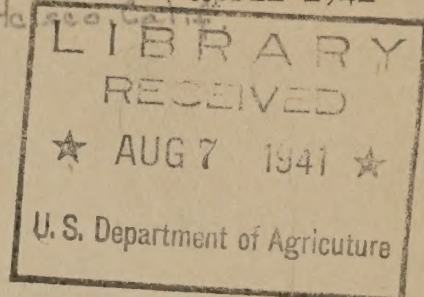
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U.S. FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, Region IX

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COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES AND EDUCATION AMONG WESTERN FARM WORKERS

The Community and Family Service Section of the Farm Security Administration in Region IX was established in July 1940, to help families on the FSA's cooperative farms and farm workers' communities develop a program of community activities and education. To such a program, ranging from community governing councils to vegetable gardens, from consumers' cooperatives to classes in child care, these "dusted-out, tractored-out" farm families of the plains states had already eagerly turned in their efforts to take fresh root in the soil.

The program's primary aim is to integrate these farm families into the established communities surrounding them. It was founded in the belief that not until these FSA families merge into the life of their larger community and town can real rehabilitation be achieved.

The program is a logical step forward from the necessarily limited rehabilitation and resettlement programs in which the FSA has been chiefly engaged since its inception in the four states served by Region IX. It marks the success of the Administration in meeting, to the extent funds would allow, the emergency which brought the original programs into being after the drought and depression of the early thirties.

Confronted in its early years with the migration of thousands of homeless farm families into California and Arizona, two of the four states comprising Region IX of the FSA, the Farm Security Administration concentrated on a two-fold



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program. It rehabilitated small farmers through loans and management guidance, and established for landless families sanitary shelter facilities that met their immediate problem. Its grant program relieved human suffering when emergencies demanded immediate action. The Agricultural Workers Health and Medical Association was fostered to give adequate medical care to these families. Part-time farms and farm associations were developed.

But these families, catapulted into a strange land from their homes thousands of miles distant, faced other problems besides economic distress. In strange surroundings, without friends, their life-long rural economic and cultural pattern shattered, they were in need of social as well as economic rehabilitation. Many were accustomed only to the life of isolated rural families. They were unaccustomed to making group decisions. Community life was new and unfamiliar. Social frustration on their part, as well as lack of understanding on the part of residents in the communities to which they came, complicated their situation.

It was in an effort to solve such problems and to encourage community growth, as a first step toward integrating these families into their new surroundings, that the Farm Security Administration developed its Community and Family Service program. The program has grown entirely out of the needs of the families; in many cases out of their own initiative. Community councils and activities were broadened and expanded by the farm workers and families as their sense of community life grew.

Today 28 projects furnishing maximum accommodations to more than 6000 families are being operated by the Farm Security Administration in Region IX. While in no way slacking up in its older programs the FSA is now beginning to place particular emphasis on the development of education and community activities.

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In doing so, the FSA is looking toward genuine rehabilitation of these farm families by integrating them into the communities in which they now live, at the same time developing a democratic rural culture. It is intended later to spread the program to include not only borrowers and other small farmers of the FSA program, most of whom are not living in FSA communities, but also to spread the program to the entire adjacent rural community.

#### What Has Been Achieved To Date?

One of the first jobs of the Community and Family Service Section was to assist local school authorities in providing educational facilities for the farm workers' children. Additions to school buildings have been built adjacent to several communities for farm workers in California and Arizona, to enable children at the communities to attend school alongside children from the surrounding established community. The school buildings, equipped with a kitchen, are leased to the local school district. In turn, the school district maintains a free lunch program available to the children of the FSA community. In Arizona a six-room school building is being constructed. In addition, community buildings have been provided on all FSA resettlement projects.

In most of the FSA's 16 permanent and 9 Mobile communities for farm workers, an intensive program of governmental, cultural and economic activities has been established in response to the farm workers' demands. A typical community will thus include a community council, which makes all the rules for community life, subject to the community manager's veto if they violate Federal regulations, as well as a WPA nursery school or pre-school play center, a well-baby clinic, a library, a community newspaper and study groups in such topics as first aid, child development and food and hygiene. The council, library and newspaper - mimeographed papers such as "The Tent City News" carrying the register of families, announcement of activities, letters from former camp members - are conducted entirely by the residents themselves.

Such a list, however, fails to disclose the richness of the community life which these farm families have developed. In connection with the community council, for instance, all the projects have such resident committees as finance, recreation, health and welfare, sanitation, young people, traffic and entertainment.

Recreational activities include crafts and athletics of many kinds, as well as dances, games, community sings, card parties, movies and spelling bees. Special activities include 4-H clubs, tap dancing, guitar playing, dramatics, and debating, old folks, young people's, men's good will, readers, "spit and argue," "stitch and chatter," camera and women's friendship clubs.

Many of the communities have open forums, consumers cooperative stores, young people's orchestras, ladies' health committees, mothers' organizations, and classes in community life, farming, child care, home economics and many other subjects.







Four communities now have consumers cooperative stores and the Section has received requests for assistance in establishing similar cooperatives from residents in four or five other communities. Most of the co-op stores carry groceries and gasoline. A typical example of the initiative of the farm workers in the economic field was the development of a Rochdale cooperative society at the Tulare community for farm workers. A group of residents met to form a cooperative, asked the community manager to serve as adviser, and elected officers and a delegation to attend a cooperative convention at Fresno. Two meetings later various committees were investigating activities and by-laws of other cooperatives, at the seventh meeting the cooperative was formed, with 63 members. Members worked out their membership fees, and today the society has a growing business in groceries, meats and gasoline.

In addition to the social and educational program of the Section, an effective home management program is in operation for FSA families, giving resident women at the communities instruction in canning, mattress making, remodeling old clothes, and similar subjects. The home management program is supervised by the rural rehabilitation division of the FSA, in cooperation with the Community and Family Service Section.

The value of this educational and activities program in integrating families into the surrounding community is well demonstrated by the interest and participation the program has evoked among the residents of the established town and nearby rural areas. In every community, outside residents attend weekly dances, and baseball games and other sports are played between farm worker community and outside teams.

#### Who Cooperates With the Program?

Recognizing the need for merging these families and farm workers with the larger community, more than 50 private and civic organizations are working with the Farm Security Administration in making the program a success. Numerous government agencies are cooperating; at the Eleven Mile Corner community for farm workers near Coolidge, Arizona, for instance, in addition to the FSA, the Agricultural Workers Health and Medical Association has built a hospital, the WPA conducts a nursery school, the NYA operates a resident center for girls and the State Department of Education operates the elementary school.

The following summary shows the extent of cooperation with the program:

##### 1. WPA

The WPA's recreation and educational divisions have generously furnished personnel to aid the program, and today most of the communities have from four to fifteen WPA recreational leaders. The past six months has seen an extension of WPA assistance throughout the region, particularly in additional personnel for nursery schools and pre-school play centers, as well as cooperation in free lunch programs. The Section is planning to request WPA personnel to train residents as recreation leaders. Negotiations have been started to obtain WPA teachers for adult study classes in American government.







## 2. NYA

A state-wide NYA project in conjunction with the FSA program was arranged for California last October. Plans were made for NYA labor to build community and shop buildings at Arvin, to be used for courses in shop work and home economics for both the farm worker community and the Vineland School District. Approximately 650 youths from FSA families have been assigned to NYA projects. The NYA Resident Center at Eleven Mile Corner accomodates 30 girls; and the NYA has asked to assign another 30 girls, to be housed in six labor homes. They will be trained in hospital work, nursery school, gardening, and school lunch and clerical classes.

## 3. Health Agencies.

A request for health class teachers from the California State Department of Public Health has been placed through the United States Public Health Service.

The Section is cooperating with the Agricultural Workers Health and Medical Association, organized by the Farm Security Administration in 1938 to provide adequate medical care for homeless farm workers, and a ten-weeks course in health education has been started at the Tulare community for farm workers by this association. Similar health programs are expected to be developed in other communities.

## 4. Universities.

Eighteen students will be assigned from social service schools of the state universities in California and Arizona for practical training at communities this summer, and the experience thus gained will be utilized to provide closer cooperation between the university and the FSA for training personnel to work in farm workers communities. Students from the University of California have already been assigned to communities during their vacation.

## 5. Private and Civic Organizations

Numerous private, civic and governmental agencies have cooperated with the new program in many ways. These include:

County Ministerial Associations	Red Cross
Local Elementary and High Schools	State Department of Education
County Health Departments	Kern County Recreation Commission
U. S. Forestry Service	Rotary Clubs
Methodist Missionary Society	Camp Fire Girls
Boy Scouts	University of Calif. at Davis
County Libraries	4-H Extension Service
20-30 Club	Girl Scouts
Parent-Teacher Associations	Local Newspapers
Los Angeles Bible Institute	Ladies' Aid Societies
U. S. Employment Service	State Relief Administration
Christian Women's Circle	Council of Women for Home Missions
American Friends Service Committee	State Department of Welfare
YWCA	YMCA
Public Affairs Committee, Inc.	State Department of Public Health
Cooperative League of America	Consumers Union
Committee to Aid Agricultural Workers	Stanford University
Hollywood Migrants' Committee	







## 6. FSA Staff

The Section is putting increased emphasis on providing FSA employees with an understanding of a comprehensive program of community activities and the organization necessary to carry out the program. Members of the Section cooperate closely with the field personnel, both at the communities and at periodic conferences, in planning and developing a well-integrated educational and recreational program.

### How is the Program Important to National Defense?

Recently the Community and Family Service Section has been devoting increasing attention to cooperating with State Employment Services and the NYA in national defense training. It has in mind the immediate objective of training and retraining those farmers and farm workers who lack opportunity for rehabilitating themselves in agriculture, as well as those of other occupational skills who have been forced out of rural regions, so that they may be absorbed into industry. Looking past the time of intensive defense effort, the Section is seeking to equip these workers with technical skills, such as ability in automobile mechanics, which mean employment in industry now and when the defense program is complete. As another long range objective, the Section is seeking to improve rural school facilities for vocational training through the use of Federal appropriations to the United States Office of Education and the NYA.

The Section has conducted surveys to determine how FSA families may help in national defense, and it has stimulated use of rural school shop facilities for training adults and out-of-school youth, cooperating with the State Department of Education, the State Employment Service and the NYA in California and Arizona. At present it appears that seven NYA farm shops are to be constructed for schools located near FSA projects or offices in California. Three similar shops are to be built in Arizona, five in Nevada and five in Utah.

At present incomplete figures show that 41 youthful members of FSA families are receiving training in such courses as welding, auto mechanics, and blue printing. Twenty-three adults are being given retraining. Incomplete figures show that sixty-five farmers and farm workers have been placed in defense industry, chiefly aircraft, shipyards and construction.

### What Are the Plans of the Community and Family Service Section for the Immediate Future?

The immediate aims of the Section are to: (1) develop the school and community activities program among farmers and farm workers, (2) train FSA field personnel to understand and meet problems arising as the program progresses, and (3) bring a comprehensive program of community activity and education to the part-time farms and farm associations operating under the Farm Security program.

### What Are the Ultimate Objectives of the Program?

The ultimate objective sought by the program is to adjust small farmers and farm workers into the new social situation in which they find themselves after being driven off the land in their home states. The Farm Security Administration in Region IX believes the Community and Family Service program to be indispensable in achieving this goal.







Only as individuals and individual families merge into groups, then into towns and finally into whole communities, can social rehabilitation be achieved. The program of the Community and Family Service Section aims at social, not solitary rehabilitation of dispossessed farmers and farm workers who are striving to take fresh roots in new soil and new communities.

Thus the program, beginning within the confines of an FSA project, must gradually extend to neighboring areas until the larger area is seen as a single community. The program is a rural program and as such must serve all rural folk, not merely FSA families. The Section believe that ultimately it cannot serve FSA families unless and until it serves all rural people within the larger community.

In brief, what the Section feels it must do, if these small farmers and farm workers growing up in a new community are to be permanently rehabilitated - socially as well as economically - is to assist in the formation of a rural cultural pattern for the future. It is endeavoring to acquire and spread the knowledge and techniques to make that pattern a truly democratic one.

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